

Lexington 2020 Vision Themes, Goals, and Recommended Actions

The themes, goals, and recommended actions listed below resulted from a comprehensive public process to create and implement a shared vision for Lexington's future in the year 2020. These goals and actions, grouped into five thematic areas, have been validated and revised through ongoing community input. Together they provide an important context for municipal decision-making and discussion on present issues.

THEME I: Promote and Strengthen Community Character

1. Design and promote community gathering places and events.
 - a. Provide town government booths at events for info and comments.
 - b. Zone business and commercial districts to encourage a “whole community” viewpoint for residents, shopping, work and leisure.
 - c. Provide space, maintained by the town, for unstructured teen activities; provide a Youth Center.
 - d. Expand eldercare services.
 - e. Reuse Cary Hall as Performing Arts Center.
 - f. Organize a Lexington Town Day.
 - g. Implement a Community Media Center.
 - h. Create a fruit and vegetable market.
2. Develop criteria and mechanism for preserving the physical character of residential neighborhoods.
 - a. Establish neighborhood council advocacy groups (with no legal authority) to promote and communicate with developers about the character of their neighborhood.
 - b. Limit “mansionization” by establishing laws prohibiting the building or redesign of homes that would make them out of scale with existing houses and/or lot sizes.
3. Provide increased housing options to promote diversity of income and age.
 - a. Enable cooperative housing for mixed generations
 - b. Enact zoning by-law changes/incentives to create more smaller-scale age-restricted housing for the elderly.
 - c. Provide affordable housing in the Center.
 - d. Provide different types of housing, e.g. high end, smaller units for down-sizers.
 - e. Encourage intergenerational living options, and ways to bring in economically and ethnically diverse populations.
 - f. Provide opportunities for new people to be able to move into Lexington as homeowners.
4. Create strong incentives to maintain and expand affordable housing.
 - a. Sustain ongoing affordable housing efforts.
 - b. Develop strategies for keeping housing affordable for current residents, including seniors.

- c. Control changes to housing stock to preserve some more affordable units – use various zoning options, take small steps.
 - d. Pursue opportunities with federal, state, county and town “surplus” land.
 - e. Make the accessory-apartment laws flexible to allow more facilities to be permissible.
 - f. Conduct equitable real estate tax assessments, including interior inspections.
 - g. Modify zoning by-laws and create zoning overlay districts to allow and encourage development of higher density housing in areas close to retail centers and public transportation.
5. Integrate transportation infrastructure and/or environmental aesthetics with commercial districts and historic and housing characteristics.
- a. Adhere to the town road repair and reconstruction plan.
 - b. Reduce the effect of expanses of asphalt paving and provide scaling elements in commercial districts.
 - c. Sidewalks: Survey conditions and existing network; prioritize and repair in timely fashion; develop plan for expanding network.
 - d. Bike path: Survey conditions and prioritize repairs, enhance interaction between Minuteman bike path and town, as well as with other existing bike paths/trails.
 - e. Implement traffic demand management initiatives (e.g., traffic calming measures, alternative transport modes).
 - f. Trees: Plant at least one new street tree for every tree removed; enhance and enforce existing by-laws regulating canopy tree planting and screening.
6. Preserve and maintain historical areas, and celebrate the Town’s place in national history for residents and tourists.
- a. Capitalize on Town’s historic standing to generate tourist revenue.
 - b. Locate, purchase and use appropriate means to preserve and maintain historically significant areas.
 - c. Provide information (signs, brochures, maps, kiosks) to alert tourists and residents to all points of historical import.
 - d. Enhance the portal to Lexington to indicate historical areas.
 - e. Improve visitors’ center/gift shop, and information provided by staff there.
 - f. Outreach to tour companies.
 - g. Re-establish walking tours of Lexington.
7. Ensure public safety.
- a. Identify, maintain, and evaluate appropriate levels of basic services and infrastructure – public safety and public health.
 - b. Provide adequate fire and police services, roads and adequate lighting to protect physical safety of residents.
 - c. Restore confidence in public safety.
 - d. Conduct contingency planning for disasters.
 - e. Re-open East Lexington Fire station.

THEME II: Foster Educational Excellence

1. Ensure that all citizens are aware of and have access to life-long education and learning opportunities.
 - a. Develop a consumer-friendly clearinghouse for all community life-long education and learning opportunities.
 - b. Publicize all education and learning opportunities through multiple media.
 - c. Employ diverse methodologies to provide classroom learning experiences to address the different gifts, talents and special needs of all students.
 - d. Clarify and convey high but realistic expectations to all students and citizens; foster critical thinking; facilitate creative thought and expression; infuse classroom learning with lessons of respect and cooperation.
2. Continuously update and modify the programming, grounds and facilities, and materials and equipment and learning facilities.
 - a. Develop and implement a committee to ensure curriculum alignment throughout school years.
 - b. Teach skills in all areas of up-to-date technology.
 - c. Mandate public schools to offer courses in the expressive arts, and to offer applied learning opportunities.
 - d. Strengthen pre-school programming.
 - e. Provide opportunities for students who fall short of or exceed performance standards.
 - f. Develop and implement a safe schools program.
 - g. Develop and implement a comprehensive support services program, including workshops on health and well-being, stress management, and self-assessment.
 - h. Maintain, improve and promote opportunities for physical recreation.
 - i. Address issues of diversity through professional development opportunities, in the curriculum and during classroom time.
3. Provide sufficient funding for educational and learning opportunities.
 - a. Maintain focus on educational excellence in the public schools.
 - b. Make sure school budget is allocated to classroom services.
 - c. Provide special education support – post-LHS/LABBB
 - d. Provide quality childcare, including extended daycare, at break-even cost.
 - e. Develop and implement a capital improvement and maintenance program.
 - f. Eliminate cost as an obstacle to not offering a desired aspect of physical education.
 - g. Maintain excellence in public library.
 - h. Fully staff and equip new library building, and increase hours of operation.
 - i. Decide future of East Lexington branch library.
4. Develop and implement a town-run partnership program to promote the concept of community partnerships with all educational and learning facilities (with business involvement, intergenerational learning, all governing bodies, students, families).

- a. Develop and implement mentoring programs: teacher-to-teacher; student-to-teacher; elders to youth; youth to elders.
 - b. Educate town in the concept of “youth as resources.”
 - c. Develop and implement a program addressing health and well-being for all family members including students.
- 5. Develop and implement an ongoing evaluation process for all systems associated with life-long learning.
 - a. Involve students in the evaluation process.
 - b. Develop and implement a committee to monitor the ongoing process.
 - c. Develop and implement a performance-based testing process for students.

THEME III: Sustain and Enhance Physical Character and the Larger Environment

- 1. Improve traffic and parking conditions in the Center.
 - a. Not just in Center, but all over town.
 - b. Conduct a traffic/parking study re: the need for and location of parking garage.
 - c. Adhere to Transportation Demand Management Policy, apply it to existing and new businesses.
 - d. Consider satellite parking with shuttles.
 - e. Provide appropriate parking for tourist buses – not on the Green.
 - f. Improve signage and crosswalks for pedestrians.
 - g. Revise/regulate old road design that leads all traffic through the Center.
- 2. Increase protected open space.
 - a. Establish Lexington Conservation Foundation.
 - b. Adopt the Community Preservation Act.
 - c. Create a private land conservation trust.
 - d. Establish local land bank that includes a real estate transfer tax.
 - e. Provide a land management program to protect wetlands, streams, and ponds.
 - f. Establish plans and policies that allocate a proportion of any property being developed to open space.
 - g. More narrowly define “open space” – involve as many constituents as possible in discussing what we will do with land and discuss tradeoffs, including budget issues.
- 3. Preserve and enhance local air quality.
 - a. Encourage the purchase and use of hybrid and/or electric autos via tax credit.
 - b. Covert commercial and public vehicles to low emissions fuels.
- 4. Reduce the environmental impact of households and businesses.
 - a. Use permitting mechanisms to require Center businesses to clean up trash, pavement and surroundings.

- b. Conduct community programs to encourage conservation and heighten awareness of the use of synthetics and chemicals.
 - c. Implement a “pay-as-you-throw” municipal solid waste disposal program, and continue to monitor and support pay-as-you-throw utility rates.
- 5. Limit traffic, noise and pollution from Hanscom Field.
 - a. Require state-of-the-art noise and pollution abatement.
 - b. Require road improvements and environmental coordination.
 - c. Manage Hanscom expansion, in commercial office development, airside issues, and ground access issues.
- 6. Increase alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.
 - a. Promote and improve public transportation services: better coordination of and increased number of routes; explore “on-call” taxi service.
 - b. Educate public about bicycling options.
 - c. Provide incentives to parents/students to use alternative modes (bicycle, bus, walking) to get to school and disincentives to drive (e.g., parking fees at high school).
- 7. Encourage economic development.
 - a. Maintain a town where it is possible for small businesses to start and continue.
 - b. Clarify vision/focus for vibrant downtown Center and update old regulations to help realize it.
 - c. Maintain vital Center with affordable housing (partially subsidized by parking) and accessibility to businesses.
 - d. Preserve Central Business District by encouraging economic development as well as staying connected to the character of the town.
 - e. Provide economic development assistance for local businesses.
 - f. Revitalize Center businesses.
 - g. Bring in more businesses.
- 8. Improve town aesthetics.
 - a. Place wires underground.
 - b. Preserve trees.
 - c. Save street trees.
 - d. Address noise pollution and aesthetic deterioration.

THEME IV: Reinforce Connections Between Residents, Civic Organizations and Town Government

- 1. Expand information dissemination options for civic activities.
 - a. Modernize and update Town’s information technology systems.
 - b. Expand and make more readily accessible the Town web site, including establishing a person-in-charge; post a meeting calendar with agendas and opportunities for Q & A.

- c. Establish a (multi-media) kiosk (could be part of an existing structure).
 - d. Use the school newspaper and radio station to inform students; use and enhance local newspaper coverage and advertising fliers in bills.
2. Provide approaches to inspire the uninvolved of all ages to become involved.
 - a. Encourage town meeting members to contact their constituents through local gatherings.
 - b. Disseminate information about/invitations to school activities to all residents, not just those with school-aged children.
 - c. Develop a brochure for residents (new and old) providing an orientation to the town, government, voting, organizations, historical assets and other items of interest.
 - d. Appoint an ombudsman.
 - e. Reach out to all citizens and allow them to participate with dignity; strengthen democratic process for involvement.
 - f. Improve communications to ensure citizen understanding of issues/proposals; get information out to the public on all decisions especially regarding costs, impact on town.
 - g. Encourage participation, increase understanding of how to make an impact and get ideas realized.
 - h. Increase integrity of public discourse.
 - i. Address distrust/dislike for government; involve those who aren't involved; address feeling of powerlessness.
 - j. Represent a wide range of all demographics in public processes.
 3. Increase accessibility/availability of government buildings, agencies, officials, materials and services.
 - a. Include photos of officials in publications, Web site, cable TV and the libraries.
 - b. Recruit and hire town employees of diverse backgrounds, including staff of all educational and learning institutions.
 - c. Support a community-endorsed plan for Senior Center requirements.
 4. Encourage increased resident participation in and understanding of the fiscal process.
 - a. Develop and organize multiple mechanisms for citizen involvement in optimizing the receipt of sufficient local, state, and federal funding for town services.
 - b. Have high school students develop a document describing the town's fiscal process.
 5. Promote use of volunteers (including students) and connect them with those needing services.
 - a. Formalize role of volunteer coordinator and publicize the position, the opportunities and the values of that interaction.
 6. Address anger/divisiveness.
 - a. Address rancor, divisiveness in Town.
 - b. Create an Ombudsman.

- c. Provide factual information in response to public comments/information – method for responding to rumors, comments that may be inaccurate and promote divisiveness and positional behavior in public discourse – strategy could include newspapers, website.

THEME V: Establish Open and Accessible Processes for Town-Wide Decision-Making, Planning and Conflict Resolution

1. Enhance and refine the fiscal process to make it useful and accessible.
 - a. Improve the system of fiscal accountability of town government: have departments establish goals for fiscal year to explain and link spending to specific goals and budget line items. Assess if these goals have been met.
 - b. Identify ways to consolidate government services and operations.
 - c. Create alternative revenue sources to reduce reliance of residential real estate taxes: incubate a pool of talent and knowledge for ideas.
 - d. Ensure that town and affiliated regional entities receive maximum state and federal funding.
 - e. Create non-tax based revenue sources (e.g. municipal electric utility).
 - f. Radically promote commercial development throughout town to increase revenue, balanced with the character of the town.
 - g. Develop a comprehensive plan for long-term fiscal stability (that recognizes “override exhaustion”) including non-tax options.
 - h. Explore making a commitment to integrating fiscal and environmental stability, e.g. more energy efficiency
 - i. Find ways to expand revenue base without going only to property taxes or fees – find unique sources of revenue such as tourism.
 - j. Plan appropriate levels of fees and taxes.
 - k. Balance public and private funding.
 - l. Develop a tax capability that is equitable and appropriate to incomes.
 - m. Deal with the cyclical nature of budget and plan for revenue fluctuations.
2. Conduct and/or influence long-range studies, policies and regulations in the areas of fiscal, transportation, technology and environmental planning.
 - a. Survey Lexington’s transportation infrastructure on a regular basis.
 - b. Continue high quality and clearly articulated 5 year plan for fiscal revenues and expenditures.
 - c. Support installation of communications technology infrastructure to encourage “telecommuting” and home businesses.
 - d. Conduct local surveys of environmental quality parameters.
3. Initiate and/or participate in regional groups to resolve common problems, address common needs, capitalize on common strengths, and share services and resources in the areas of transportation planning, open space, environmental quality/monitoring, and fiscal planning.

- a. Establish effective agencies and increase effectiveness of existing agencies to manage Hanscom expansion.
 - b. Establish intermodal transport routes connecting Lexington with transport centers.
 - c. Address transportation issues dealing with air quality, traffic, noise, visual impacts, wetlands/conservation land (Lexington excluded from Rte. 3 committee).
 - d. Establish and promote a regional planning authority to address the protection of open space.
 - e. Annual fiscal reporting for town and private agencies should include information on regional opportunities and agency actions to promote involvement and usage.
4. Re-evaluate, through a participatory structure, the 2020 vision and planning processes periodically.
 - a. Re-evaluate success with respect to Goals and Measures every 2 years.
 - b. Survey residents on a regular basis to ensure that the Goals are on-target.
 - c. Rely on 2020-derived “core values” for decision-making.
 - d. Weigh long-term savings and benefits against short-term investment.
5. Strengthen and support existing democratic processes for town decision-making.
 - a. Encourage existing organizations to discuss town issues and provide feedback to the appropriate entity.
 - b. Use mechanisms for expeditiously resolving conflicts.
 - c. Assure that public hearings and public notices are widely used to provide information and solicit input from residents, and that all town decisions are publicly disclosed and explained.